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Cohesion in Simultaneous Interpreting: from the Audience's Perception

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Synopsis

Cohesion, a prominent concept in discourse analysis, has been widely discussed internationally in the academic world ever since it was first proposed in 1976 by Halliday and Hasan. In the past several decades, it has also been widely applied to a vast range of academic disciplines, among which the field of translation studies serves as fertile ground for the practical application of cohesion theory.

Simultaneous interpreting is a special communicative activity in which all participants, including the speaker, the interpreter(s) and the audience, are actively involved. To achieve successful communication, the audience's perception must be taken into account. As an indispensable property of target-language text, cohesion used by interpreters has great impact on the audience's comprehension and gratification. However, the bulk of studies on cohesion's implication in translation are focused on written-text translation, leaving interpreting, especially simultaneous interpreting seldom covered. This thesis attempts to apply cohesion theory in simultaneous interpreting and contributes to the inadequate research into cohesion in SI from the audience's perception.

This thesis consists of six chapters:

Chapter I consists of a brief introduction to cohesion, which includes the background of cohesion studies, the application of cohesion in the field of translation and the importance of this thesis. The purpose of this thesis is discussed at the end of this chapter.

Chapter II introduces the definition of cohesion, the function of cohesion, and academic debates within the field of cohesion. The audience's perception in SI together with how cohesion influences the audience's comprehension and gratification is also discussed.

Chapter III elaborates on the classification of cohesion in discourse analysis and the features of text in SI; where a definition and classification of cohesion in SI are

derived. There are five categories in cohesion pertaining to SI, namely, reference, substitution and ellipsis, conjunction, lexical cohesion and phonological cohesion.

Chapter IV consists of an empirical study, using the classification of cohesion in SI, to investigate the correlation between different types of cohesion and the audience's perception.

Chapter V discusses the findings in the empirical study. The interpreters' weaknesses of using different cohesion is presented and analyzed. Pedagogical suggestions on SI training are proposed to improve trainee's skill of using cohesion to enhance the audience's perception.

Chapter VI concludes that the correlation between cohesion and the audience's perception is applicable in SI studies for trainee interpreters to improve their target-language text.

Key Words: Cohesion; Simultaneous Interpreting; Audience's Perception

摘要

衔接是语篇分析中的一个重要概念。这一概念最早于 1976 年在韩礼德与哈桑的著作《英语中的衔接》一书中被明确地提出,并在学术界引起了广泛的讨论。此后,衔接一直是语篇研究中的热点,被应用于各个领域,包括文体学、翻译、外语教学、社会语言学和心理语言学等学科。其中,它在翻译学科中的应用尤为突出。

同声传译是一项特殊的双语交际活动,需要讲话人、译者以及听众的共同参与。听众的感受很大程度上决定了同传的交际目的能否成功实现。衔接是构成语篇的要素之一,同传译语语篇中的衔接对于听众的理解和舒适度有着重要的影响。但衔接理论在翻译中的应用多集中在笔译方面,鲜有出现在口译中,尤其是同传中的应用。本文是将衔接理论用于同传研究的一个尝试,希望能够从听众的角度来分析同传译文中衔接的作用,从而帮助译员更好使用衔接来进一步提高听众的感受。

本文分为以下六个章节:

第一章简要介绍了衔接理论的研究背景及其在翻译学科中的应用,同时阐明了本文研究的必要性和目的所在。

第二章回顾了前人对衔接以及同传中听众感受方面的研究,重点着眼于衔接的定义、作用及衔接研究中的一些争议,阐述了衔接对于听众的理解和舒适度的影响。

第三章基于同声传译中的译语语篇的特性,提出了同传译文中衔接的定义与分类。衔接指的是译语语篇中的不同成分在语义上的联系,可以分为指称、替代、连接、词汇衔接和语音衔接五大类。

第四章在衔接分类的基础上进行了实证研究,进一步分析不同类型的衔接对于听众的理解和舒适度的影响。

第五章讨论了实证研究的结果,主要结论是三种衔接手段的使用分别与听众的理解和舒适度显著正相关或负相关。本章还分析了译员使用衔接的弱点,并提出了相应的教学建议。

第七章总结全文，不同类型的衔接对听众的理解和舒适度有不同的影响，译员可以有针对性改善译文中衔接的使用，提高听众的阅听感受。

关键词：衔接；同声传译；听众感受

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Chapter I Introduction

1. 1 Background and Necessity

1.1.1 Background of Cohesion

As one of the cornerstones in the study of discourse, cohesion has been widely discussed in academic circles, since its conception, as befits such an important topic. Despite the importance attached to cohesion, it is a relatively new field of study within the greater discipline of discourse. In 1960, a seminal paper analyzing syntactic structures and parallelism in literary texts with reference to poetry was published by Roman Jakobson's (1960). It suggests that literary texts have cohesion or internal patterning and repetition. This academic paper is considered to be the first one to introduce the idea of cohesion. On the heels of Jakobson's paper, a fully formed concept of cohesion was proposed for the first time by British linguist Halliday (1976) who was enlightened by Chinese grammarian Wangli (1943). Later, cohesion was turned into a fixture in the lexicon of linguistic studies.

In the next four decades, the study of cohesion generated a phenomenal growth of interest from scholars from a variety of academic fields, particularly after the publication in 1976 of Halliday and Hasan's preeminent work on cohesion, *Cohesion in English*. All over the world, scholars from a myriad of backgrounds turned their attention to the nascent theory of cohesion. These scholars began to study cohesion by applying paradigms from their respective fields of study. Many scholars (Halliday&Hasan, 1976; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1985; Gutwinski, 1976; Hoey, 1983; Martin, 2001; Huzhuanglin, 1994; ZhuYongsheng, Zhenglixin & Miao Xingwei, 2001) have attempted to define cohesion in specific and concrete terms. These early attempts to define cohesion laid the foundations for the future development of cohesion studies by establishing the original building blocks of the theory upon which future scholars have added. Considering its relatively modern

conception, cohesion is still in its early stages of development. For all the efforts of pioneering scholars in the field of cohesion, it is still in the process of evolution and cumulative deliberation. Further, there are still many unresolved issues in the field of cohesion. These unresolved issues mostly revolve around three aspects of cohesion, namely: the concept of cohesion has yet to be defined comprehensively; the classification of cohesion is yet to be fully established; and the relationship between cohesion and coherence is still a very controversial issue. A large portion of debates within the field of cohesion, as well as outside it, have dealt with whether coherence comes from cohesion or vice versa.

1.1.2 Cohesion and Its Application in Translation

Considering the fact that since its inception, cohesion study has attracted scholars from a variety of fields, the concept of cohesion has been widely applied in a vast range of academic disciplines, such as stylistics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, language teaching and learning, translation studies, and psycholinguistics. The field of translation studies acts as fertile ground for the practical application of cohesion theory. Further, it serves as a platform for cross-disciplinary research. As pointed out by Newmark (1987:295), the topic of cohesion has always appeared to be the most useful constituent of discourse analysis or text linguistics applicable to translation (Baker, 1992; Neubert & Shreve, 1992; Kazem Lotfipour-Saedi, 1997; Li Yunxing, 2001; Munday, 2001; Xiao Liming, 2002; Xu Yulong, 2002; Zhang Delu & Liu Rushan, 2003; Malmkjaer, 2005; Zhao Yanchun, 2005).

For example, in the research by Blum-Kulka & House (1986), the issue of possible shifts of cohesion in the translation of written texts is addressed. They argued that the process of translation necessarily entails shifts both in textual and discoursal relationships. On the level of cohesion, shifts in types of cohesive markers used in translation seem to affect translations in one or both of the following directions: 1) shifts in levels of explicitness; and 2) shifts in text meaning(s).

Kazem Lotfipour-Saedi (1997) states that according to modern trends in linguistics, a text rather than a sentence is the unit of communication, and

communication of meanings in human verbal transactions is achieved within the framework of a text. Of the many features that delineate a text from non-text, cohesion has been argued to be one of the most fundamental tools in helping the audience make correct distinctions between a text and non-text. His paper defines the notion of translation equivalence in terms of lexical cohesion. The type of lexical strategies employed by source language discourse producer, the nature of the cohesive network (predictive, prospective, as well as retrospective) created by such strategies, and the type of semantic structures which exist among the lexical nodes in this network are first characterized and target-language equivalent text is then examined in terms of similar lexical strategies.

Miriam Shlesinger (1995) states that a text hangs together by virtue of a network of relations which establish links between its various parts. These links, or cohesive ties, enable the reader or the hearer to process a text in a coherent way. However, as she further points out, for simultaneous interpreters, the process of recognizing cohesive ties is encumbered by various constraints, which are intrinsic to simultaneous interpreting (SI), including speed of delivery (which the interpreter cannot control), linearity (the fact that a text becomes available only gradually), and the interpreter's own limitations in terms of accessing background information (which assumed by the speaker to be available to his/her audience, including the interpreter). In her study, Miriam Shlesinger, (1995), examined shifts of cohesion which occur in SI, using data drawn from an eleven-minute piece of spontaneous discourse rendered by thirteen student interpreters, his findings suggest that shifts do occur in all types of cohesive devices, particularly in those perceived as not essential to the informational content of a text and in devices whose recognition requires knowledge which is not available to the interpreter.

1.1.3 Necessity of This Thesis

The bulk of the studies mentioned above focused on the application of cohesion in translation, particularly on one facet of translation, written-text translation. Only fractions of existing literature on cohesion discussed it with regard to interpreting, and

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